

Name: _____

PREVIEW:

What do I already know about the United Nations?

Read the statements in the box below and circle “T” if the statement is true and “F” if it is false.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. The United Nations’ headquarters is located in New York City. | T / F |
| 2. Only the five largest countries in the world can vote in the UN. | T / F |
| 3. There are 300 countries represented in the United Nations. | T / F |
| 4. The main objective of the UN is to encourage peace and prosperity. | T / F |
| 5. There are five official languages of the UN. | T / F |

HISTORY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The name “United Nations” was first coined by United States President Franklin Roosevelt during the Second World War. On January 1, 1942, representatives of 26 nations signed the “Declaration by United Nations,” to pledge that their governments would continue to fight together against the Axis Powers (led by Germany, Japan, and Italy).

Before the United Nations (UN) was created, an organization called the League of Nations existed. The League of Nations was established during the First World War to promote international cooperation, but after failing to prevent the Second World War, the organization was shut down.



In 1945, representatives from 50 countries came together to discuss international organization and how to stabilize international relations. The UN was officially established on October 24, 1945 when the UN Charter was **ratified**¹ by China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, and a majority of other countries. Poland later signed the charter and became one of the original 51 Member States. The purpose of the UN is to bring all nations of the world together to work for peace and **development**² based on the principles of justice, human dignity, and the well-being of all people. UN Day is celebrated on October 24 every year.

¹Ratify: To give formal approval or sanction

² Development: The improvement of people’s lives by providing access to health, education, and employment

THE UNITED NATIONS TODAY

There are currently 193 members of the United Nations. They meet in the General Assembly, which is the closest thing to a world parliament that currently exists. Each country, large or small, rich or poor, has a single vote. The United Nations Headquarters is in New York City, but the land and buildings are international territory. The United Nations has its own flag, its own post office, and its own postage stamps. Six official languages are used at the United Nations - Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. There are UN offices in Vienna, Austria, as well as the UN European Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland and Economic Commissions in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Amman, Jordan; Bangkok, Thailand; and Santiago, Chile, each of which addresses the economic issues facing its particular region. The senior officer of the United Nations Secretariat is the Secretary-General. Ban Ki-Moon from South Korea holds this position at present, and he has been in office since 2007.

There are five main bodies that comprise the United Nations:

1. The **General Assembly (UNGA)**: the main assembly consisting of all member states
2. The **Security Council (UNSC)**: oversees and authorizes military action and establishes peacekeeping operations; consists of five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) known as the P5, all of which have veto power, and ten other countries that serve two year terms and are elected by the General Assembly
3. The **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**: promotes international economic and social development
4. The **International Court of Justice (ICJ)**: passes judgment on nations or individuals that commit international crimes, helps to settle disputes between countries
5. The **Secretariat**: establishes procedural rules, undertakes studies in order to collect information required by the UN, headed by the Secretary-General.

There are also many other United Nations groups and initiatives that focus on more specific issues than these large bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and many more.

The United Nations has four main goals:

- to keep peace throughout the world;
- to develop friendly relations among nations;
- to help nations work together to improve the lives of poor people, conquer hunger, disease, and illiteracy, and encourage respect for each others' rights and freedoms;
- to be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations to achieve these goals.

The flag of the United Nations represents...



General Assembly Hall

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